**Sermon, Advent 4, Sunday 24th Dec 2023**

*In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The 22nd December marks a sometimes unnoticed turning point in the year. It’s known as the *‘shortest day’* of the year, or the *Winter Solstice*. That’s the day when daylight is in its shortest supply. And of course, with this lack of daylight comes certain problems – you might feel sluggish and your mood might even be affected by the lack of light. But, as the calendar moves away from the 22nd December we can be reassured that we are now past the absolute depth of the year. Light is now increasing in our days and this light will gradually flood the world. You might not notice it at first, but it most definitely is there, working, and becoming more prominent.

And with that broadening of light comes restoration: a restoration of creation. Flora and fauna spring back into life as days lengthen. Also, we discover a restoration of our own sense of self and being – our energy levels increase with the abundance of light. It all leads to a restoration of equilibrium to the world. After the 22nd December, we are on that path once again. And here we are, on the cusp of restoration in the light. For, on this last Sunday of Advent we stand close to Christmas Day.

Christmas in mid-winter is a day and a time where we celebrate the coming of light. But the light which we anticipate and celebrate is a different light to that which is regulated by clocks. It is not a light which comes and goes with the seasons or diminishes when the clocks go back or forward. As John’s Gospel promises: *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world*. On this day, we stand on the brink of welcoming that true light, our Lord, into the world.

This is the light of restoration, or the new creation which is now urgently waiting to be ushered in. For as creation itself reacts positively to the light in the sky, the new creation of God’s kingdom in Jesus Christ is being born. From the darkness of what has been, something good will come and not just something good, but something better. God’s kingdom will come – and it will come in his way, rather than our own flawed ways. Whatever is of the old in our lives - our own personal hurts and disappointments, our own shortcomings – the new creation comes to restore and renew in the light of Christ’s presence.

In these dark times in the world, which are heavily punctuated by poverty, war, and terror, something new is offered, namely, the new creation of Christ and his kingdom, his light and his presence. That divine presence is seeking to be ushered in on this day. That presence is here to sweep away the darkness of the night and to bring in a new day of light, a new dawn of his presence among us. May that new creation of thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That dawn begins here. It begins now. It begins as we come to approach the light in the sacrament of the Eucharist. As we receive the true light into our lives by being one with it in his body and blood.

So, as the days become longer and light gradually becomes more apparent to us, we stand ready to welcome the true light into the world and into our lives. Come and be one with that light in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Come and let the light of his new creation of love and hope flood your life and the world around you.

Today we know that the light is coming - the true light. Now is the time to go out to meet him in that light. Now is the time to be one with the light. The new creation is knocking on our door. It’s time to welcome it in.

*In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*